**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2011**

**Watermelon Solutions**

[](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_CwjJ7tENQDA/TJncvrAFvXI/AAAAAAAAALo/DlgJ-a5MIP0/s1600/SMALL_DPUO_Postcard.jpg)

**Palm Oil. Luscious, lathering palm oil. It’s in your chocolate, your shampoo, your bread, biscuits, your soap, and your icecream.  When you next slather Pantene pro-V in your hair, and wonder how it gets that silicon shine, remember the orangutan who just got evicted for your luscious locks.**  
About 85% of the world’s demand for palm oil comes from Malaysia and Indonesia, where tropical rainforests are regularly cleared in the name of the almighty dollar, meeting the demand of the consumers who don’t know any better about what goes into the product, and how it got there.

Every year the average Australian digests ten kilograms of palm oil  [1].  It is high in saturated fat, and increases the risk of heart disease. When we were all told to eat less fat in the late 20th century, It was introduced as an alternative to trans fatty acids, which are much higher in saturated fat, but who would have thought the solution would cause this much trouble?    
In addition to being an ingredient in cosmetics and food, palm oil is also farmed as a biofuel. Whilst biofuel sounds like a greener alternative to fuel derived from traditional oil, biofuel is a potential watermelon (green on the outside, red on the inside), when the resource comes from unsustainable farming.  
Biofuel can come from palm oil, corn, sugarcane, cellulose (made from switch grass, willow or other fast growing plants) and algae[2]. Essentially, early generations of biofuel (which are all of these, beside algae) have proven just as nasty to the environment as the processes they were trying to cancel out. Greenhouse gases are emitted in their production, and even worse, humankind is using farmland to feed their cars, when the world clearly doesn’t have enough food to feed the almost 7 billion people it is now trying to support.

Palm Oil is in 50% of products in your shopping trolley [3] – either present as palm oil (the fruit pulp), which is edible and used in foods, or palm kernel oil (seed extract), which is used in shampoos and soaps and related products. If fact, it’s in nearly every lathering product on the shelf, and sadly, the deforestation caused by the world’s demand for Palm Oil, is eroding the habitats of elephants, rhinos (of which there are only 170 – 230 left in the world [4]), orangutans (6,600 left in the world [5]) and Sumatran tigers (400 – 500 left in the world [6]). Not only is it destroying the environment of several endangered species, but a by-product of its production includes excessive greenhouse gases.  
  
***In Southeast Asia alone the equivalent of 300 football fields are deforested every hour. During 1998 and 1999, loss of orangutans reached a rate of about 1,000 per year. 80% of orangutan habitat has been altered or lost already and it's forecast that at the current rate of deforestation, orangutans could be extinct in the wild in as little as 20 years.***  
The above data from WWF is from eleven years ago, which predicts wild orangutans might be extinct by 2020. I would think sooner, if you consider the world’s exponential population growth since this statistic was generated.  
So, in a world addicted to shine, chocolate and being squeaky clean, how do you still buy soap, shampoo and chocolate without the palm oil? You need to read your product labels.  
There is a movement at present for sustainable palm oil – farmed on land that has not been deforested. In fact, there are 19 growers recognised by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil [7] and that number will grow with demand.  
However, if you want to make a difference and be a darker shade of green, choose products that don’t use any palm oil at all (consider the fact that growing palm oil replaces a possible food crop). Eat a healthier diet (unprocessed foods won’t have any palm oil), and choose shampoos and soaps that use other ingredients.  
Cosmetic products must, by law, include ingredients such as palm oil on its packaging. However, on a cosmetic product, it might not be called Palm Oil – it might say Sodium Lareth Sulphate, or any of those listed below.  
Thank you to Palm Oil Action for the following list of palm oil disguises:

**Alternative Names For Palm Oil**  
Sodium Laureth Sulphate (Can also be from coconut)  
Sodium Lauryl Sulphates (can also be from ricinus oil)  
Sodium dodecyl Sulphate (SDS or NaDS)  
Palmate  
Palm Oil Kernal  
Palmitate  
**Cosmetics**  
Elaeis Guineensis  
Glyceryl Stearate  
Stearic Acid  
**Chemicals which contain palm oil**  
Steareth -2  
Steareth -20  
Sodium Lauryl Sulphate  
Sodium lauryl sulfoacetate (coconut and/or palm)  
Hydrated palm glycerides  
Sodium isostearoyl lactylaye (derived from vegetable stearic acid)  
Cetyl palmitate and octyl palmitate (and anything with palmitate at the end)  
It’s best to avoid a food product if you are not sure, because it is not law that it is labelled in food. You can consult the Ethical Supermarket Guide (available as a website – see links, an iPhone app or an easy reference booklet available in some bookstores) which will help you navigate the supermarket, avoiding the palm oil based products. However, soon you’ll realise that your favourite product is right up there with the rest of the guilty parties.  
So how are you going to wash your hair, you ask?  
There are a myriad of products on the market that are SLS free, and some companies have realised that there is a growing consumer demand for non SLS products.  It will take you just one slightly longer shopping trip to work out what you can buy instead, and you might find much better, and sometimes cheaper products.  
[Natural Instincts](http://www.naturalinstinct.com.au/) and Natural Alternatives (available in chemists, priceline, health food stores) do a complete range of products that will pretty much cancel out any palm oil based product you have in the shower, at a lower cost than what you might be used to.  
[David Babaii](http://www.db4wildaid.com/), [Aveda](http://www.aveda.com.au/)and [Karpati](http://www.karpati.com/)would be the best of the higher end shampoo/conditioner products to try. They do a better job than Pantene and both are available in health food stores.   
And I’ve only mentioned five brands so far. There’s too many on the market to list here, but you’ll find it’s easy enough...please provide your own comments on this blog about other great alternatives.  
And as for chocolate, you’ll be pleased to know that Cadbury succumbed to consumer complaints and have removed palm oil from their range. Nestle on the other hand, is another story, so maybe stick to the purple wrapper

1. [www.WWF.org.au/Palm-Oil](http://www.wwf.org.au/Palm-Oil)

 2.       Gwynne Dyer’s Climate Wars, published by Scribe, 2010.  
3.       [www.WWF.org.au](http://www.wwf.org.au/)  
4.       [G Magazine](http://www.gmagazine.com.au/), #26  
5.       G Magazine,  #26    
6.       [www.greenpeace.org](http://www.greenpeace.org/)  
7.       [www.rspo.org](http://www.rspo.org/)

**REFERENCE**

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